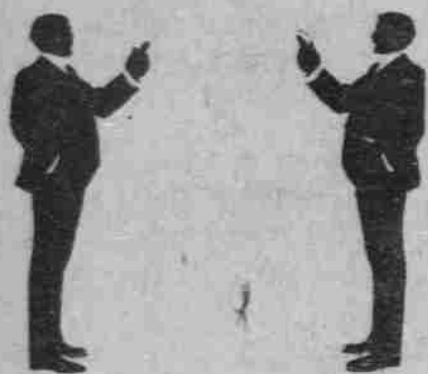


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FRANK G. CARPENTER'S LETTER.

THE WOMEN OF DAMASCUS

WOMEN WITH VEILS WHO HAVE QUEER MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

How Mohammedan Wives Are Chosen—The Jewesses and Their Dowries—How They Marry in Syria—A Divorce Which Did Not Work—Women's Rights in Turkey—Slave Girls and Slave Weddings—Queer Brides and Bridegrooms of Levant.

(Copyright, 1910 by Frank G. Carpenter.)

DAMASCUS, Feb. 1.—O! Ye bright-eyed, fair-skinned girls of America! Drop for the moment your hobbles, skirts and peach basket hats and take a look at your sisters of Damascus in faraway Syria! How would you like to exchange your life for theirs? How would you like to spend your days without showing your face to the light of the sun? How would you like to go about in a great bag of black silk which is tied in at the waist so that it covers your form from the head to the feet, except for a short, thick veil of black which enables you to feel your way along the street? How would you like to be peeped up in the back of your house, or to have your front windows so latticed that you could see out only through holes as big around as a lead pencil? Aye, more, how would you like to never talk to any man but one of your own family, and worse, never to have any other man or boy talk to or see you?

This is the condition of the girls of this fanatical city of Damascus. It is the fate of millions of other women in Turkey and of the female Mohammedans throughout the whole world. Among the Veiled Women. Within the past 30 years I have visited every Moslem country on earth, and have worn out my eyes trying to see through the veils which hide the fair sex. In Morocco their faces are covered with cotton, and they peep out through a crack as big as your finger, made by pulling the cloth slightly apart in front of the face. In Kalouah the girls cover their faces with black crepe, so thick that you cannot tell whether they are negroes or whites; and in Tunis they are so shrouded that they have to lift up their cloaks a few feet in order to pick their way through the streets. In Zanzibar the girls wear bags which cover them to the feet, and their only view of the world is through peepholes as big as a 50 cent piece, which are hedged around with lace netting, so that a man cannot see in. In Egypt, the headress comes down to the eyebrows, and a veil extends from there to the knees, with the exception of a crack for the eyes, the crack being kept open by a gold or brass hoop which rests on the bridge of the nose. In Constantinople the fashionable Turks are doing away with the veil or using thin white gauze through which the face can be plainly seen. It is thus that the harem of the sultan is dressed, and thus the wives of all the rich men.

Here in Damascus the women stick to the veils of flowered muslin or black crepe, and they wrap themselves in great balloon like cloaks of black silk or calico. These bulge out above and below where they are tied at the waist, making each maiden look like two huge lumps of sausages as they waddle along. I see hundreds of them every time I go through the city. They through the bazaars, where they bob back and forth as they talk with the merchants. They may be seen picking their way through the side streets or sitting on the floors of the mosques reading the Koran and watching the men go through their prayers. Many of the veiled figures are those of small girls. They take the veil at 11 or 12, and the veils are kept on after marriage until death.

And then the houses! All of the Mohammedans have houses so latticed that the women cannot be seen from the streets. In some cases the windows are built out over the sidewalks, hanging out like boxes of wooden work. This is so in the new apartment houses which are now going up, and also in the huts of the poor, although the latter seldom have windows except at the back. The ordinary lattice is made of cane-like rushes or sticks, and preparing them is a special trade followed by many. The rushes are brought in to Damascus already trimmed on the backs of donkeys, which as they go fill the streets with their loads.

Queer Divorce Laws. It behooves the Mohammedan woman to be strict in her conduct. The husband has most of the rights, and he can divorce his wife, or wives, whenever he will. He sometimes does so

without thinking, and that to his sorrow. I heard of such a case yesterday. According to the laws of Damascus, if a man wishes to get rid of his wife he has only to say, "I divorce you! I divorce you! I divorce you!" and the woman must leave. After she has gone, however, she cannot come back as his wife until after she has been married to some one else. To get around this, an angry husband, relenting and longing for the dear departed, arranges to marry her to a friend, a dervish, or to some half crazy man, who for a sum of money goes through the ceremony of a wedding and then immediately divorces the woman, who can then be married again to her old husband. In the case referred to the man had a quarrel with his wife and angrily muttered the words of divorce. Immediately she had gone he repented, and thereupon brought about her marriage with an alleged friend, upon the understanding that a divorce was to follow the ceremony. The friend, however, refused to utter the words of divorce, saying, "I like the woman and will keep her myself," and so it is at this writing.

Such divorces are always on the part of the husband. As for the women, they have more difficulty in getting rid of the marriage tie, although they can do so, provided the husband does not perform his duty to them or give them an equal amount of attention with the other wives of the family. According to Mohammedan law, a man may have four wives, but the Koran provides that he must spend an equal time with each of them, and in some places he is required to give each a separate establishment.

Marriage in the Holy Land. During my travels in the Holy Land I have picked up some interesting stories of marriage and divorce. Every sect has its own customs. The Jews can divorce easily, and the Christians can marry as often as they like, although they are not allowed a divorce without cause. In all of the Jewish weddings the girl brings a dowry, the amount of the dot being mentioned in the contract of marriage. This contract is always signed in the presence of the rabbi, and the wedding ceremony takes place under a tent in the courtyard of the synagogue. Before the marriage the bride is shaved from her head to her feet, and after that her head is always kept covered. At the ceremony and after it they have music, with drums, cymbals and harps, and the old fashioned customs of Bible times are preserved. The Jews marry young, and a girl is an old maid at 20.

The Peasant Mohammedans. The Mohammedans of the villages usually take wives when they are entering their 20th year, and the bride is usually older, and it is customary for married men to marry young girls and to add them to their harems as the first wives grow older. In such cases the groovy laws of marriage are disregarded. This is the reverse of the Jewish marriage, where the money goes to the groom. The price for a Mohammedan wife ranges according to the financial condition of the contracting parties. The contract is made by the elder people of the family. If there is a father he decides upon the marriage. If the father is dead the eldest brother may act, or in some cases the mothers. As to the right of the family to dictate the marriage are rigid. The other day a peasant living near Jerusalem had a sister who ran away with her lover and married him. This was against the family and objected to the marriage of the two. The peasant took a revolver and went after the bride couple. He met his brother-in-law in Jerusalem and shot him dead on the street. When arrested he justified the crime and he is now imprisoned awaiting trial. I am told he will get off with a slight punishment, as he has acted within his rights according to the Koran.

Brides of the Cities. Among the city Mohammedans the bridegroom makes a present of a dowry sufficient to enable his bride to purchase her trousseau and household furniture. He may give her six or eight hundred dollars, and the bride part of this will go to her nearest male relative, being paid before the wedding takes place. On the other hand, he and that relative may buy the outfit together, making items of the various things and their cost being added to the dowry. If not paid, 25 or 30 percent being left until after the wedding. This is not demanded, except in case of divorce, and it is considered a premium that will insure good treatment on the part of the husband.

The bride seldom sees the groom before the wedding, and the groom never meets her before that time. The investigations of both families are carried on by the fathers and mothers, independent of the real parties to the marriage.

How They Marry in Syria. I asked a Mohammedan friend of mine last night to tell me how marriages were arranged here. Said part of, "When a boy is old enough to have a wife, let us say at seventeen, his parents begin to look about for a suitable girl. The mother goes to the harems of her acquaintances, and asks as to the daughters. She also visits the girls' schools, and when she has found a maiden whom she thinks may suit, she invites the mother of the girl to meet her at the bath. This is one of the chief places of gossip and pleasure, and the girls are returned here. Said he, "To the bath the girl comes with her mother, and she there has her first interview with her prospective mother-in-law. The two talk and gossip together, and very likely go into the bathroom and plunge, clad in the light attire of two Turkish towels, the fashionable garb for the occasion. After the bath there is more talking and the girl is sized up mentally and physically. Upon the return home, the mother of the groom tells her husband the result

of her investigations, and if he is pleased negotiations are begun with the parents of the bride. If agreeable the dowry is fixed and the betrothal is made. Neither the marriage nor the betrothal can be consummated without the consent of the girl. This consent is got in connection with the man, or Mohammedan priest, who appears at the door of the harem of the bride's mother. The girl is behind the door, and she is asked if she will consent to the match. She has to answer "I will" three separate times, after which the amount of the dowry may be paid over in the presence of witnesses.

Queer Wedding Ceremonies. In all oriental countries the wedding ceremonies are very important. The marriage is always an occasion of great festivity, and not to be invited is a grave offense. One of the proverbs here is, "He who does not invite me to his marriage will not have me at his funeral." Among the Mohammedans the wedding ceremonies often last a week, during which there is feasting on the part of both families. The dinners are given before the wedding, and at the time of the ceremony large amounts of money are thrown to the beggars. The wedding usually begins Monday. Tuesday the bride is taken to the bath and there is a feast there, the bridegroom paying the expenses of the bathing and eating.

Wednesday the bridegroom's lady friends go to the house of the bride, where they have a concert and dinner. At this time the finger nails and toe nails of the bride are stained red with henna and they begin to deck her out for the wedding. Thursday the bride is taken to the groom's house. In the great procession and there the two eat candy, exchanging mouthfuls or bites, the idea being that nothing but sweetness is hereafter to pass from the lips of one to the other. The bridegroom has not seen the bride until this time. He here says a prayer in the presence of the bride, kneeling on her bridal veil as he does so.

Mohammedans of Palestine. Among the Mohammedans of Palestine, so says my guide Shamus, the wedding usually takes place at the mosque. The wedding sermon is given, the bride when she is on the way thither, although she is so veiled that he can not see her. She is dressed all in white and is carried under a canopy on the shoulders of four men. At the mosque the wedding person is given, and at the end of the bride goes to the house of her husband. As she steps over the threshold she bends down and passes under two crossed swords upheld by his friends. This means that if she is not true, she will be killed. She is taken first to the women's apartment or harem, over the door of which has been placed a piece of leavened dough with a green leaf lying upon it. She presses the palm of her hand on the leaf, and the dough, thus signifying that the home into which she has come will flourish. In some cases the bride breaks a piece of leavened bread and gives to the young people to eat.

After she has entered her own apartment in the groom's house, there is a feast, the guests sitting on the floor and eating course after course of meats and vegetables, interspersed with candies and sirups. In some cases the groom has to make the bride speak before the dinner will be served, and it is a virtue with her to keep silent just as long as she can.

Women's Rights in Syria. It is the general idea among Christians that Mohammedan wives have no rights at all. Their husbands are bound to respect. I am told this is not so, and that the women here do not infrequently rule their husbands. The cost of living has increased greatly within recent years, and it is only a rich Mohammedan who can own several wives. Public sentiment as to the rights of women has risen, and the man who abuses his wives is not considered respectable. No man dares address a strange woman on the streets of any Turkish city, and in the best regulated houses the husband does not enter the woman's apartments when he knows he is not wanted, although he has the legal right to go there at any time.

The Mohammedan wife has the entire right and control of her own property and if she brings the money into the family she does not hesitate to say so. She has about as much power in the courts as our women have. She can sue and be sued and can even enter suit against her husband in regard to her own property. She can make a will and leave her property as she pleases, and she can force him to pay the dowry agreed upon. When she marries he has to buy the wedding gown and if he divorces her she gets back her trousseau.

Slave Marriages. It is said that women are still bought and sold in the Turkish possessions. Not long ago there was a regular trade in the black girls who were brought across the Sahara from Central Africa and shipped through Tripoli into Syria and other parts of Turkey. Before the English took hold of Egypt this traffic was carried on through the Nile valley and it was winked at by the officials. The girls were sold in Morocco, and slaves are brought in from parts of the Caucasus to Constantinople.

According to the law of the Koran marriages with slaves are illegal. The wives of the sultan and of the harems who are brought in from Georgia and Circassia, a plump, bright-eyed, red-headed, white-skinned girl being worth as much as a half dozen white horses. I am told that Circassian girls are glad to be sold out of the harems which they are sure to find in their own country. They are bought young

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and are trained up for wives. Such as can play on the zither and other musical instruments bring more than the ignorant, and the blonde is worth more than the brunette. In the past \$5000 will go through a Circassian girl, and any good looking Georgian maiden of 12 would bring \$200 and upwards. According to law the children of such slaves are legitimate.

Frank G. Carpenter.

CHINESE WAR IN CANANEA AVERTED

Seven Hatchet Men Are Arrested When They Levy Tribute on Country-men.

CANANEA, Mexico, Feb. 11.—The Chinese population of Cananea almost had a war of their own yesterday, and has it not been for the prompt action of the officials, there might have been serious trouble. It seems that there are a number of "hatchet men" in Cananea, who levy tribute upon the business men of their race. Mayor Arnold caused the arrest of seven of the six when the trouble started and they are now in jail.

A licensed Chinese gambling house seems to have been the worst treated, and its owners made complaint to the officials. Later several Chinamen were noticed to be carrying firearms and they were immediately arrested. One man had two 45 caliber pistols on his person. When he was about to be placed in jail he gave a twist and eluded his pursuers. One man purchased six cigars for 25 centavos each and presented some policeman with them, at the time remarking that they would fight it out with their countrymen on Thursday afternoon at 2 o'clock. He was also arrested.

The Chinese merchants have been repeatedly threatened with death if they do not "come through" to the hatchet men and in every case they generally respond quickly. A short time ago two of the hatchetmen were shot while attempting to secure money from one of the merchants.

A RASH BECOMES A MASS OF HUMOR

On Baby's Face, Head and Shoulders—Parents Decided He Could Not be Cured—Cuticura Made His Skin Perfectly Clear.

"Our boy was born in Toronto on Oct. 13, 1908, and when three months old a slight rash appeared on his cheeks. What appeared to be a water blister would form. When it broke, matter would run out, starting new blisters until his entire face, head and shoulders were a mass of scales and you could not see a particle of clear skin. Other parties had been afflicted, but not to such an extent. We did not know what to do for him and tried almost every advertised remedy without avail. Indeed some of them only added to his suffering and in particular, one remedy, almost put the infant into convulsions. The family doctor prescribed for him and told us to bathe the baby in milk. This did not do any good, so we took him to a hospital. He was treated as an out-patient twice a week and he got worse. If anything, he then called in another doctor and inside of a week the boy was to all appearances cured and the doctor said it was his doing. But the very next day it broke out as bad as ever.

"We decided that it could not be cured and must run its course and so we just kept the rash bandaged to prevent his scratching his face. We left Toronto and shortly after our arrival in Duluth, the Cuticura Remedies were recommended. We started using them in May, 1909, and soon the cure was complete. You would not think he was the same child. He is entirely free from the skin disease. There has been no return this time. We still use only Cuticura Soap for baby's bath. Robert Mann, Proctor, Minn., May 3, 1910."

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